

**Introductory remarks**  
**Panel: Reports from the Regions: Achievements, Gaps and Challenges**

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I would like to thank the NGO Committee on the Status of Women for the possibility to participate in the consultation and moderate this session. Although I will be formally welcoming you to the Commission on the Status of Women at the opening session tomorrow, I would like to take this opportunity to give all participants a warm advance welcome. The Division for the Advancement of Women has a very positive tradition of cooperation with the NGO community around the CSW, including joint events on the themes before the CSW each year and excellent collaboration on the organization of the side many events organized by NGOs during the CSW sessions.

NGO and civil society groups and networks are pivotal stakeholders in the policy development at global level and in efforts at national level for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. Active NGO participation in the work of the CSW is critical for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of its review in 2000. We are therefore encouraged by the huge interest by NGOs in participation in the ten-year review in the Commission this year.

I do not need to impress on you the importance of the ten-year review of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action being undertaken at this session of the CSW. We will also be commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975. The focus of the work programme of the CSW will be on national level implementation and there will be an unprecedented number of opportunities for dialogue and exchange of experiences and good practices through the high-level roundtable and seven interactive panels.

The challenge before the Commission is to secure reaffirmation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and enhanced commitment to action to ensure full implementation. The outcome of this session of the Commission will provide an important input to the review of implementation of the Millennium Declaration in the General Assembly in September this year.

I would like to make a brief introduction to the global review, the outcome of which is contained in the Secretary-General's report: Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (E/CN.6/2005/2.) The report is based on 135 responses to a questionnaire submitted by the Member States.

In their responses, many Member States noted the continued relevance of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session and the need for renewed commitment to full implementation; as well as the importance of adherence to international and regional instruments for the promotion and protection of women's human rights, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol.

Member States noted that much has been achieved over the past decade in terms of increased awareness, policy reforms, legislative change, and institutional development at national level. Positive developments reported include establishment of national policies and strategies for gender equality in almost all countries. Countries also reported increased diversity in the mechanisms at national level promoting and monitoring attention to gender equality (such as gender equality commissions, ombudspersons offices and parliamentary networks and caucuses); increased attention to resource allocations through gender-sensitive budgeting; and efforts to engage men and boys more actively in promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. Many Member States in their responses also recognized the critical role of NGOs in awareness-raising, advocacy, monitoring and programme delivery and called for increased collaboration.

The report clearly indicates, however, that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remain far from being fully achieved. A large gap between policy and practice needs to be addressed in the coming decade. Progress has been uneven within regions and across regions. While some gains had been seen in relation to each of the 12 Critical Areas of Concern in all regions, serious obstacles and challenges were also reported in every area.

All countries reported on discrimination in legislation, policy or practice which continues to deprive women of their human rights in all spheres. Persistent gaps in all regions included low levels of women's representation in decision-making positions; stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices; and discrimination in employment, including occupational segregation and wage gaps. Violence against women, including domestic violence, was noted as a major challenge worldwide, and several countries reported continuing harmful practices. In some regions, Governments noted disproportionately high poverty levels among women, and their insufficient access to or control of economic resources. Governments also noted the serious effects of conflict on women, particularly sexual violence. In many countries, women's health, in particular lack of access to reproductive health services and high levels of maternal mortality, continued to give cause for concern. Countries reported high prevalence of HIV/AIDS

among women. Trafficking in women and girls was of concern to many Governments. The persistence of discriminatory legislation was noted in some countries.

Responses indicated that attitudes towards the gender equality and empowerment of women among the general public and within Government bureaucracies have not changed at the same pace as policy, legal and institutional frameworks. Explicitly addressing persistent stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices is critical to the full implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session. In all areas the challenge presented by lack of statistics to systematic and effective monitoring of progress was highlighted. Many countries also reported inadequate allocation of resources to efforts to integrate gender perspectives into all policy areas as well as to targeted activities for gender equality and empowerment of women.

In assessing progress in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it is important to complement the information provided by Member States in response to the questionnaire with the progress reports contained in two recently released reports -the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development report: "Gender Equality. Striving for Justice in an Unequal World." as well as the report of the Taskforce Three of the Millennium Project report: "Taking action: Achieving gender equality and empowering women."

I would finally like to draw your attention to a second Secretary-General's report which provides an overview of the efforts of United Nations in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. (Measures taken and progress achieved in the follow-up to and implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, with an assessment of progress made on mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system (E/CN.6/2005/3).

I want to congratulate the NGO Committee for the efforts to provide shadow reports on ten years of implementation. In this context, I am now honoured to introduce to you the panelists who will provide overviews of the regional reports.